

D. Repeals the 7.5 percent threshold for the deduction of medical expenses, thus making all medical expenses tax deductible.

By providing a wide range of options, this bill allows individual Americans to choose the method of financing health care that best suits their individual needs. Increasing frustration with the current health care system is leading more and more Americans to embrace this approach to health care reform. For example, a poll by the respected Zogby firm showed that over 80 percent of Americans support providing all Americans with access to a Health Savings Account. I hope all my colleagues will join this effort to put individuals back in control of health care by cosponsoring the Comprehensive Health Care Reform Act.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIMOTHY J. WALZ

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2007

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, earlier today, I missed rollcall vote 795, a motion to recommit on H.R. 3159, the Ensuring Military Readiness Through Stability and Predictability Deployment Policy Act of 2007.

I was detained while meeting with the Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Rep. JIM OBERSTAR of Minnesota, to discuss the situation in Minneapolis following the collapse of the I-35W Bridge over the Mississippi River.

Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall vote 795 because it was a procedural tactic to prevent consideration of the underlying bill.

As a veteran of the Minnesota National Guard myself, I strongly support the aims of H.R. 3159, which would ensure that returning servicemembers receive sufficient time to readjust from their deployments before being called up again.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1, IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9/11 COMMISSION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 27, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker while I commend the work on H.R. 1, I rise today to express my disappointment that the provision to afford our Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) the collective bargaining rights and whistleblower protections they deserve is excluded from the Conference Report. Mr. Speaker, our TSOs are not second class citizens and should not be treated as such.

In 2001, when the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) was created, Congress vested power to set TSO compensation, leave, and other basic employment rights with the Secretary of Transportation. When TSA was moved to the Department of Homeland Security, this authority remained. While this

authority was helpful in getting TSA up and running, the TSOs now need to be treated like all other TSA employees—fairly and equitably. This provision would have restored the labor rights of approximately 43,000 TSOs and provide them with veterans' preference, anti-discrimination protections, retirement, whistleblowing, and collective-bargaining rights.

Restoring basic employment rights is critical to recruiting and retaining TSOs. We do not need to look far to see what low morale can do to the health, recruitment, and retention of the Department of Homeland Security workforce. According to a GAO report released this month, TSOs account for approximately a third of the total workforce and their attrition rates are higher than normal for the federal government. It is unfortunate that we are failing to provide the most basic labor protections to our front line workers who perform an important job and work to keep us all safe; rights that are afforded to thousands of workers in the federal government.

I commit to my colleagues today that as Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security I will continue to work to ensure that our TSOs are afforded the rights and protections they deserve.

Additionally, the following individuals did a service to our nation in helping the Conference develop legislation to make America more secure: Michael Stroud, Denise Krepp, Véronique Pluviose-Fenton, Alison Rosso, Jacob Olcott, Chris Beck, Matt Washington, Jeff Greene, Erin Murphy, Michael Beland, Erin Daste, Tamla Scott, Tyrik McKeiver, Stephan Viña, Diane Bean, Brian Turbyfill, and Angela Rye.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that a lot of staff work went into getting us here today, and I would like to especially thank: My staff director, Jessica Herrera-Flanigan; and my chief counsel, Rosaline Cohen, as well as her predecessor, Todd Gee.

I don't mean to brag but I believe I have the best and most diverse professional staff on the Hill. A few of them are here with me on the floor. I also would like to acknowledge: the Committee's very able clerk, Michael Twinchek; Ranking Member KING's staff—most especially Rob O'Connor and Michael Power; the folks at Legislative Counsel that brought it all together—Hank Savage and Hadley Ross; Mike Sheehy and Jerry Hartz with the Speaker's office; and Rob Cogorno and Mariah Sixkiller with the Leader.

HONORING THE LEGACY OF CORPORAL ANGELO VACCARO

HON. JOHN L. MICA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2007

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker, today as I entered the grounds of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and approached the Warrior Transition Brigade Headquarters, I saw the name "Vaccaro Hall." This morning the United States Army dedicated Vaccaro Hall in honor of my constituent, Corporal Angelo J. Vaccaro, from Deltona who lost his life performing heroic actions in Afghanistan. It was my honor to personally congratulate Corporal Vaccaro's wife, mother and father on the well deserved

recognition of Corporal Angelo Vaccaro's heroic actions.

The late Corporal Vaccaro, his wife and parents have been part of the Seventh Congressional District in Central Florida. His distinguished service to our country as a medic in the United States Army earned Corporal Vaccaro the honor of being the first member of the Armed Services to receive two Silver Star medals during the Global War on Terror.

Corporal Vaccaro was the loving husband of Dana and the youngest son of Nelson and Linda Vaccaro. He led by example and never boasted of his accomplishments and efforts on the battlefield.

Born in New York, Corporal Vaccaro moved to Deltona, FL where he lived until he joined the Army on March 14, 2004. According to family and friends, Corporal Vaccaro had found his place in life as a medic with the Army's 10th Mountain Division.

Corporal Vaccaro's honorable service to our nation included a deployment to Afghanistan. He conducted more than 140 patrols and heroically risked his life in order to save the lives of fallen comrades. On one such occasion, Vaccaro's platoon came under heavy enemy fire and Vaccaro and four others suffered significant injuries. Ignoring his wounds and still battling Taliban forces, Corporal Vaccaro used his own body to shield fellow soldiers from the enemy while he dragged the wounded to safety and began emergency medical treatment. Corporal Vaccaro's actions during this battle earned him his first Silver Star.

Corporal Vaccaro's second Silver Star was a result of his final heroic actions that saved two of his injured comrades in need of immediate evacuation from the battlefield. While serving as the senior line medic at the Koregal Outpost in Afghanistan, Corporal Vaccaro learned that members of his platoon had come under attack by Taliban forces and that two of them required immediate medical attention. Despite being informed that an ambush was in place for any attempted rescue efforts, Corporal Vaccaro volunteered for the mission without hesitation. Soon after reaching the battle site and while assisting in the successful evacuation of all the wounded, Corporal Vaccaro was struck and killed by a rocket propelled grenade. The country lost a true American hero.

In addition to the Army naming the building that houses Walter Reed's Warrior Transition Brigade Headquarters to Vaccaro Hall and the two Silver Star medals, Corporal Vaccaro earned two Purple Hearts and the Army's Bronze Star for his actions during battle. In June the Army named Fort Drum's new state-of-art medical training facility that was opened on the day that Vaccaro was killed in battle, the Bridgewater-Vaccaro Medical Training Simulator Center.

Madam Speaker, with the passing of Corporal Angelo Vaccaro, America has lost a hero, an outstanding citizen and a shining example of service to our nation. He will be remembered as a patriotic American, a loving husband, beloved son and a friend to numerous others. It was a pleasure to have attended the dedication of Vaccaro Hall at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and I am proud that those visiting Walter Reed will be reminded of Corporal Vaccaro's heroic sacrifice on behalf of his fellow Americans.